



## **CLARK COUNTY HOUSING OPTIONS STUDY AND ACTION PLAN**

### **Project Advisory Group Meeting #1**

January 26, 2021 – 3PM to 5PM

### **DRAFT SUMMARY**

PAG Members: Stephen Abramson, Ron Barca, John Blom, Sierk Braam, Kate Budd, Victor Caesar, Carol Collier, Nancy Dong, Bryant Enge, Julia Getchell, Marc Maggiora, Martha Maier, Christina Marneris, Julie Olson, Heidi Rosenberg, Eric Scott, Bryan Snodgrass, Dan Whiteley, Phil Wuest.

County Staff: Jacqueline Kamp, Jenna Kay.

Consultants: Steve Faust, Anais Mathez (3J Consulting).

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Councilor Julie Olson welcomed PAG members and thanked them for their participation. This is the culmination of several efforts to create housing options in the unincorporated area of Clark County. Over the past few years, County Council has approved code changes regarding ADUs, cottage housing, manufactured housing, and tiny homes to help housing affordability and options.

### **Project Overview**

Jacqui Kamp provided an overview of the project. Housing costs are rising in the county, regionally, and nationally. Rapid economic and population growth has led to surging housing demand at the same time housing supply is low, leading to rising rents and home costs. County Council is interested in finding out what other barriers and opportunities there are to creating housing for a variety of household incomes in Vancouver unincorporated urban growth area. Almost as many people live in the project area as in the City of Vancouver.

The tasks of this project will result in a housing options study action plan with a summary of what was learned and recommendations will be presented to the public, Planning Commission and County Council of ways the County can encourage the development of more housing that is attainable to a variety of household incomes.

The project was initiated in spring 2020. Interviews with key stakeholders were conducted throughout the spring and early summer. That process also resulted in a recommendation of what interest groups should be represented on the Project Advisory Group. This project will consider what is working in other places and new state housing legislation. Battle Ground, Ridgefield, and Camas are conducting similar studies.

## **Project Process and Schedule**

Steve Faust reviewed the specific tasks of the housing options study and action plan. Stakeholder interviews were conducted in spring and early summer of 2020. Phase 2 is underway with housing-related data collection and analysis, and housing policies, zoning, and regulatory review. Beginning this spring, the consultant team will conduct a series of community engagement activities as recommendations are developed. This phase will last through the summer of 2021. The consultant will prepare the action plan in fall 2021 and initiate the legislative process for approval.

## **PAG Charter**

Steve reviewed the PAG Charter, starting with the PAG charge:

- Provide a broad and diverse set of perspectives to help ensure community support for the Plan
- Help develop recommendations
- Advise on and help implement public involvement strategies
- Inform and engage constituencies, communities, and civic organizations

The PAG will meet approximately 10 times over the course of the project. PAG responsibilities include:

- Review and comment on work products.
- Guide public outreach and engagement efforts.
- Act as liaisons to specific constituencies or interest groups.
- Host public events.
- Encourage community members to participate in the process.

The PAG will use a consensus-based decision-making process. For this process, consensus is defined as a participatory process whereby representatives seek to reach agreement on a mutually acceptable course of action. Decisions are made by agreement rather than by majority vote where representatives agree to support, accept, live with, or agree not to oppose the decision. The key to success is commitment to work for consensus, meaning members will participate fully in the process, seek to understand the interests of all, and work together to find solutions for all.

If consensus for a proposal is not reached, the group will explore whether modifications to that proposal can help achieve consensus. If modifications to the original proposal are viable, the group will entertain another proposal. Regardless of meeting outcomes, all views will be recorded in the meeting summaries and forwarded to decision-makers along with recommendations.

PAG members made the following comments (staff and consultant comments in *italics*):

- We will need to run through ideas of a clear understanding of what problems we are trying to tackle and a way to measure whether changes we propose can be monitored for results. We don't see anything about accountability of the proposals relative to desired outcomes. This is a wide-reaching group and constituents will have different

desires. We need to be able to define what it is we are trying to impact and this group should be able to show measurable methods for outcome of change.

- *Goals it to provide additional housing and a variety of housing types in this area of the county that are affordable to a variety of incomes. How to measure the impact of proposed measures will be considered as the project progresses.*
- I echo the initial comment. We need to come up with a set of metrics that must be attended to and we should come up with these as a collective, whether or not there is data on it.

### **Public Participation Plan**

The Public Participation Plan (Plan) is a communication plan so the public knows when opportunities to participate will happen and decisions will be made by the Planning Commission and County Council. Ways to engage County residents are different during COVID, so we may not be able to do as much in person outreach. The Plan has goals including social equity and justice. Community members who are vulnerable to rising housing costs should be at the center of the project. Accessible participation is another goal. We want to make sure online activities are accessible by computer and phone and include opportunities not online, such as individual field trips. Language translation and interpretation will be provided upon request. Meaningful participation is the third goal. Participation takes place early and throughout the process. Transparency and accountability is the fourth goal. We want to make sure opportunities will be clearly defined and advertised for the public to provide timely input. Outreach tools will include website, email and social media, the Project Advisory group, stakeholder interviews, public meetings, comment periods, hearings, and print materials.

County staff asked PAG members for their thoughts on two questions: 1) Are there specific stakeholder groups the County should be sure to prioritize in public participation efforts? 2) Are there other tools or activities the County should consider using to reach specific stakeholder groups? PAG members had the following comments:

- I appreciate providing multiple opportunities to participate.
- I get a lot of information from Next Door.
- Be sure to include people without online access.
- *The Messenger*
- I have a number of stakeholder groups and ideas and will submit them by email. We are missing out on sharing information via the chat function. This meeting is less efficient without the chat.
- Engagement with disadvantaged groups. We have representatives here that can help with that. This is a big calling for you to show tools and innovative approaches to dealing with housing affordability. I recommend engaging with the Incremental Housing Alliance. The list is by invitation only and I've approached them about inviting this group. It's an excellent resource to look at other groups across the country.
- A mechanism to communicate with others in this group would be helpful.

## Stakeholder Interview Summary

Anais Mathez provided a summary of the findings that emerged during stakeholder interviews. Three rounds of interviews were conducted with a total of about 70 people. The purpose was to identify the full range of issues related to housing and understand different perspectives among key stakeholders and community leaders. In addition to phone and video calls, an online survey also was available. Finally, we were able to convene a focus group of real estate brokers. Question topics included:

- Observations of housing options and affordability in Clark County
- County development regulations and barriers
- Types of residential development that seem promising
- Best practices (regulatory and non-regulatory)
- Impacts to naturally occurring affordable housing and displacement
- Where new housing should be located
- Who else we should be speaking to

The range of ideas included:

- Housing types. Predominantly large lot, single family housing, targeted for over 100% AMI. Demographics are shifting toward an aging population and younger families. Household incomes do not match with housing prices and not enough variety of housing types and prices are available. Importance of new floor plans to accommodate different household needs.
- Zoning. Oversaturation of single family zoning. Some confusion about overlapping density ranges. Misplaced minimum and maximum lot size standards. Not enough high density zoning along major transportation corridors and poorly located commercial zoning.
- Land supply. Land availability is a difficult challenge. Land available is encumbered and expensive to develop.
- Infrastructure costs. Many parcels in Clark County cannot easily be served. Disconnect between infrastructure development and where housing is expected to occur.
- Review and permitting process. Lack of concurrent review for plans. Desire for clear and objective housing goals. This could result in significant cost savings since other costs are fixed.
- Fee structure. Some believe it's one of the highest in the state. Poor fee scaling relative to building footprint.
- Design standards. Desire to develop a better urban design framework for developers. Others say they are fine, but need to be balanced.
- Location criteria for new housing types. Public transit, schools, grocery stores. Denser areas are where new housing types should be built. Concern about pushback from established neighborhoods. Avoid infill in just one area to promote diversity across neighborhoods.
- Parking. Need better access to transit. Most new developments are car-dependent.
- Affordable housing incentives. Few regulatory incentives to build affordable units. This might open up land that would otherwise be too expensive to develop. Incentives could

include density bonuses, transfer of development rights, land banking models, inclusionary zoning.

- Public perception of non-traditional housing types. Community perception has shifted to a more anti-density sentiment across the region.
- Displacement concerns. Some view that displacement isn't a significant challenge. Most development is greenfield development. Others have seen loss through rehabilitation efforts. Others see advantages to the removal of substandard housing. Interviewees also mentioned manufactured home parks as an important source of affordable housing that is vulnerable and in need of protection through zoning.

PAG members were asked: 1) Do you have any observations to share about the themes identified through the stakeholder interview process? 2) Do these themes represent the full range of issues we should consider in this process? If not, what else should we consider? PAG members had the following comments:

- Appreciate the comment about mobile homes. Also want to make sure that RV parks are on our radar. Many people with lower incomes live in RV parks and that is the only shelter they have and can afford. Look to preserve and create more opportunities, especially for those more than 10 years old.
- Need to focus on how to distill this information. Assume that you would get different answers now. What are the key components that dictate what needs to be done and how are strategies are evaluated? Displacement and buildable capacity have different definitions, so let's agree on those and then we can move forward.
- Issues are reflective of what the Planning Commission is dealing with on a regular basis. Some changes might benefit one group at the expense of another group. We are in this position because most rules and regulations were put in place to benefit one segment of the community. We need to be clear about who will benefit and how to mitigate the impact on others. Try to have building standards in place to better allow building in place. To create these standards as a mandate increases costs. This document shows us those juxtapositions. It's not a roadmap, but the current state.
- Range of issues and some of them are complex policy issues that we can't solve in six months. For the work we do on this committee, it would help to have a screen that we apply to identify those things that are low hanging fruit and those that are more long-term. Affordability is an acute issue. Supply is an acute issue. Need concrete actions that can be acted on while still looking at the long-term issues.
- Need to clarify complexities and agree on language. Need to understand public perceptions and concerns.
- How much of our job should be about changing people's perceptions about housing? Expand the idea of what a great livable community is.
- Need to think outside of existing single family home and apartments, and think about what a cottage cluster looks like. Other ways to add density. Learn from Portland residential infill project what can work here.
- *We are open to examples from other places of tools and approaches as well as outreach efforts and techniques.*

## **Project Scope**

PAG members were asked to review and comment on upcoming tasks.

### **Task 3. Data collection, inventory, and analysis**

ECONortheast is leading the data collection and analysis task. Objectives include:

- Determine the needs and market gaps this project can solve for.
- Help illuminate potential opportunities or barriers to housing production.
- Compare County-produced capacity projections with housing needs projections.

PAG members were asked: 1) Do you recommend any modifications to the Task 3 scope of work? 2) Do you think we are missing any data that will be important for forming recommendations? PAG members provided the following comments:

- Identifying housing by age can help a lot. Developing a brand new project is different than rehabbing a 50-year old project in terms of making something affordable and accessible.
- We still will be faced with the issue that inventory by itself does not make it affordable. I see household income by AMI and tenure. We may need to be able to cross reference that somehow. We may have enough lots and zoning, but we are building capacity and inventory for people that don't currently live within the county. We are not building for the people already here and do not have the income. We know there are many people not getting served.
- Two aspects we need to work on: 1) inventory so that right type of units are being developed, and 2) program coordination so new housing goes to the populations that need it.
- Migration data could be helpful to understand where people coming from and how it affects housing availability and pricing.

### **Task 4. Policy and regulatory review**

JET Planning will be leading this task. The scope of work includes:

- Land Use Policies, Zoning and Regulations Audit. Analysis of existing policies to understand opportunities and barriers to housing development. Includes proforma to test regulatory impacts.
- State Housing Legislation Overview. How recent housing legislation informs opportunities for Clark County.
- Jurisdictional Case Studies. Lessons from three similar jurisdictions about both regulatory specifics and process/public messaging to support similar housing code updates.
- The audit scope includes Comprehensive Plan and long-range planning policies, zoning code, zoning map including land availability (per VBLM).
- The audit will be:
  - *Descriptive*, to understand existing universe of plans, policies and regulations that affect housing development
  - *Evaluative*, to understand the impacts of those plans, policies and regulations relative to desired housing development outcomes

- Proforma: Evaluate whether certain housing types are financially feasible under current zoning standards.

PAG members were asked: 1) Do you recommend any modifications to the Task 4 scope of work? 2) Is there any other information we can collect that will be important for forming recommendations? PAG members had the following comments:

- The data analysis process is limited to what we've done before because we have not yet articulated what we need to attend to. It would be more effective if this process were grounded in a statement of what needs to be accomplished. Then the data collection, design, plan, and analysis are based on those sorts of factors. What we are gathering might not align with what we're trying to accomplish.
- Glad you are including the pro forma analysis because people don't understand what features impact affordability.
- Is there a document guiding us or a vision document to tell us what the community says about the community they want to live in.
- *County vision is the comprehensive plan. We have policy statements in the housing element and the community framework plan.*
- What about incentives and funding sources? There are special housing authority funds that might not be well known. Make sure information about that gets put into the process.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Next Steps**

PAG members agreed that the day of the month and time work well, so the next meeting will take place on February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 3-5pm where we will discuss findings from the data analysis. Planning Commission and Council briefings will take place regularly.

A PAG member suggested that others review the information in the meeting packet, and the Affordable Housing Task Force report should be provided as an additional resource. The economics and social implications have changed, but a lot has been done previously that we should be aware of. Make sure people get updated information ahead of time.

### **Adjourn**